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Corporate Executives' Guide To Personal Computing

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COMPUTER DECISIONS
MARCH 15, 1984
THE MANAGEMENT MAGAZINE OF COMPUTING
A HAYDEN PUBLICATION

Managers Rate The Major Micros

Our informal poll reveals the winners and losers in the race to be the most popular corporate micro.

User Autonomy Vs. Corporate Authority

Now that employees have micros, how can you direct them toward a goal without stifling innovation?

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Micro Uses, Misuses, and Mistakes

Personal computers are remaking the workplace, but executives must ensure the changes are for the best.

Alternative Avenues To Personal Computing

The best way to provide personal-computing power may be without personal computers.

SPECIAL ISSUE

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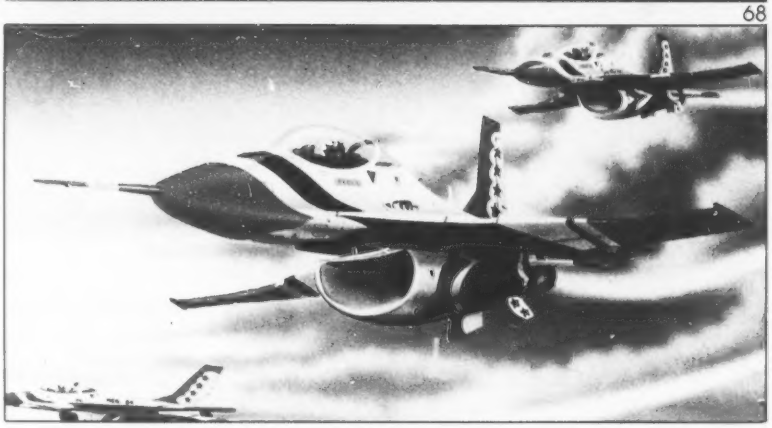

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25 MANAGERS RATE MAJOR MICROS

by Jordan Gold

Are the top personal computers all they're cracked up to be, or are IBM, Apple, DEC, Xerox, and the rest of them little more than designer labels? A poll of 25 managers, conducted by *Computer Decisions* with the help of the Microcomputer Managers Association, suggests that when managers acquire a corporate personal computer, they don't expect to get the perfect machine. Rather, they buy a micro that satisfies one or two corporate requirements.

For example, not all of the respondents whose organizations have IBM Personal Computers are happy with them. Many managers bemoan the fact that its keyboard departs from the standard IBM-typewriter layout. Others complain about the inadequate networking and mainframe-communications software available for the machine (although there is more communications software for the PC than for any other micro) and the relative incompatibility between the different versions of PC-DOS, the machine's operating system. Other faults cited include the single floppy-disk drive in the hard-disk version of the IBM PC, the PC XT; and IBM's inadequate support of such early software as Easywriter 1.0, a word-processing package, and Fortran compiler language.

Yet the IBM PC is a favorite among corporate managers, and it wouldn't have attained that status if it didn't offer a number of outstanding characteristics and business advantages. Several of the respondents to the poll considered the PC's expandability and memory capacity major attributes. The vast number of third-party vendors, providing everything from memory and add-on boards to disk drives and cooling fans, also enhances IBM's popularity.

The survey indicates that some managers didn't choose the IBM PC for its overall quality or special features, but for the intangible benefits tagged onto the name IBM. One overwhelming benefit is the wealth of good business software available for the IBM PC. "No machine is head and shoulders above any other in features or price. My company's choice, the IBM PC, doesn't even represent the best hardware available," says Howard Ingram, personal-computing specialist for the Collins Transmission Systems division of Rockwell International

Photo By Bob Ward

A poll of managers gives the IBM Personal Computer some high marks and some low marks. How do they rate the personal computers you have?

Inc., Richardson, TX. "However, the wide variety of software developed for it more than compensates for its shortcomings."

For another manager, knowing he'll be able to count on IBM for service and support 10 years from now is reason enough to buy its personal computers. "None of the personal computers available really meets my company's needs, and so I go with IBM for security," he explains.

Intangibles are important when managers choose one personal computer over another. For some users, owning an IBM is a matter of prestige. "It's those three letters," one respondent comments. "None of the executives in my company even thought about using a personal computer until IBM came out with one." And as another manager puts it, "Many executives think the IBM PC looks impressive on their desks."

For whatever reason, and despite the drawbacks, 17 of the 25 managers surveyed have chosen